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## **U.S. Embassy Announces Young African Women Leaders Forum Small Grants Recipients**

The Department of State and U.S. Embassy in Nairobi announced the winners of the Young African Women Leaders Forum Small Grants Program in Kenya during a coffee reception at the U.S. Embassy on September 29, 2011. The program, which is supported by First Lady Michelle Obama, seeks to provide an opportunity for women and girls to lead local projects that benefit the applicant's local community. It extends the vision of the Young African Women Leaders Forum, a workshop and conference for African women leaders involved in social and economic initiatives held in June 2011.

Cultural Affairs Officer Raymond Stephens awarded the grants that range from \$2000 to \$5000 to six organizations. During the reception, the winners talked about their projects with colleagues and discovered similarities in their approaches to solving problems in their local communities. Among the winners is a project designed to reduce girls' high school dropout rate in the Nairobi area of Kibera by increasing girls' access to sanitary pads. Another winner will use her grant to start a hothouse in a girls' school that will provide students with fresh fruit and vegetables without walking miles in the dark to the nearest market. A third project will make affordable school uniforms and sweaters for low income families in a particular village. Because many families struggle to purchase expensive school uniforms and sweaters, making inexpensive uniforms will enable low income families to keep their children in school.

One recipient said at the reception how grateful she is to the United States for the opportunities this grant will provide so many girls and young women in her village. She commented that the most disadvantaged in her village were females, and now they will be empowered to take charge of their own future.